

HONORING THE 125TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE CHARTERING OF THE BOROUGH OF SOUDERTON

HON. CHARLES W. DENT

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 21, 2012

Mr. DENT. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the 125th Anniversary of the chartering of the borough of Souderton, Pennsylvania and to pay tribute to the many contributions its inhabitants have made to the cultural fabric of eastern Pennsylvania.

Chartered in 1887, Souderton's rich history actually began when the first inhabitants, the Lenni-Lenape or the Delaware Indians settled the area. They were some of the first native peoples to come in contact with Europeans in the early 1600's. The land that today comprises Souderton was originally purchased by William Penn from the Lenape. The first wave of European settlers were Welsh immigrants who gave Souderton the name of Welshtown. They were followed by German Mennonites in the early 1700's and by 1750 they would occupy most of the land. Some claim Souderton got its name from one of its early settlers, Henry O. Souder, but in fact the North Penn railroad company gave the location its name in 1863 to differentiate between the borough and the village of Soudersburg in Lancaster County.

While established as primarily an agricultural community, the railroad's arrival in 1857 encouraged rapid growth in the community. Textile and cigar factories brought prosperity and new populations to the borough. The borough's initial bank, Univest Corp. of Pennsylvania, was established in 1876 and remains an active and vital part of the community today.

When it was chartered as a borough in 1877, Souderton had a population of 600 people. In 1879, the first church in the community, the Souderton Mennonite Meetinghouse, opened on Christmas Day, and the first school in Souderton opened its doors that following year. The population had tripled by 1910. Citizens were able to access the nearby bustling city of Philadelphia via railroad on the North Penn lines, while the nearby community of Perkasio was connected by the Liberty Bell Trolley service. The first automobile arrived in town on May 1st, 1903, and residents soon began enjoying pleasant rides down Main Street, formerly known as Possum Lane. The borough's population doubled again by 1940. Following World War II, the demand for expensive labor in the textile industry declined but the community remained vibrant. Today, Souderton is mostly a quiet, family-oriented residential community.

To commemorate their 125th Anniversary, Souderton borough is hosting a year-long celebration that has included a community clean up day, a parade and fireworks show, historical trolley tours, and a memorial picnic.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that my colleagues join me today in recognizing the 125th Anniversary of the Borough of Souderton, Pennsylvania.

IN HONOR OF MR. BLAISE J. DURANTE, DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR ACQUISITION INTEGRATION, OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE AIR FORCE FOR ACQUISITION

HON. C. W. BILL YOUNG

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 21, 2012

Mr. YOUNG of Florida. Mr. Speaker, on the occasion of his retirement, I want to take this opportunity to honor Mr. Blaise J. Durante for his 45 years of dedicated service to our country. In his most recent assignment, he served as the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Acquisition Integration, in the Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Acquisition. In this role, Mr. Durante oversaw the integration of Air Force research, development and acquisition budget formulation and execution, and directed streamlined management team activities, including acquisition reform and reduction in total ownership cost efforts. Mr. Durante directed the development of acquisition policy and served as the Chief Financial Officer for the Air Force modernization accounts, managing all acquisition reporting systems along with the Air Force's international research, development and analysis programs. In over four decades of active duty military and civil service, he has held numerous director positions, leading both Air Force acquisition plans and policy, and joint service programs. Mr. Durante retired from the Air Force at the rank of Colonel in May 1992 after 25 years of active duty and was appointed to the Senior Executive Service in 1992. A native of Everett, Massachusetts, Mr. Durante began his career in the Air Force in 1966 after receiving his commission through the Officer Training School and graduating from Northeastern University. His active duty career included assignments to the Air Force Aero Propulsion Laboratory, Air Force Systems Command, Electronic Systems Command, and Headquarters, United States Air Force.

Success has followed Mr. Durante throughout his career, and he is known as the Air Force's premier troubleshooter for acquisition challenges. As just one example, when the Department of Defense cancelled the Tr-Service Standoff Attack Missile program in 1995 and the contractor subsequently filed a \$1.3 billion contractor claim, the Air Force hand-picked Mr. Durante to lead a tiger team that aided the General Counsel's office in eventually reaching an extremely favorable \$58.5 million settlement.

Mr. Durante has held his most recent post since 1994, during which time he has had a significant impact on Air Force acquisition processes and execution. His Directorate was responsible for integrating the Air Force's \$40 billion annual Air Force modernization budget, which accounted for nearly 30 percent of the total Air Force budget. In this role, he monitored performance of the Air Force's 400 plus program portfolio to achieve maximum efficiency for limited funding. In fiscal year 2011 alone, he executed over 255 actions valued at \$2.195 billion to fully fund priorities and support our ongoing Overseas Contingency Operations.

For over four decades, Mr. Durante has been a passionate advocate for the develop-

ment of a professional and competent acquisition force. Countless leaders today call him, "Mentor". He partnered with the Defense Acquisition University to better train program managers and led his team to develop a comprehensive Career Field Education and Training Plan that provided a roadmap for our young men and women to develop into the knowledgeable leaders of tomorrow. In 2008, he correctly identified a significant gap in leadership training for entry and intermediate level program office personnel, and launched the Acquisition Leadership Challenge Program. Since its inception, this program has graduated over 4000 Air Force acquisition leaders, and provided them with critical leadership training previously only available to senior managers. As further evidence of his dedication to professional development, Mr. Durante is a founding member of the Aerospace and Defense Advisory Board for the College of Business Administration at the University of Tennessee. He has since inspired the creation of the nation's only Executive Master of Business Administration program designed for aerospace and defense professionals, and sponsored over 48 military and civilian Airmen for this unique program.

Mr. Durante is also known for his dedicated championing of continuous process improvement (otherwise known as CPI). Over the past few years, he served as lead for several initiatives under the Secretary of the Air Force's "Acquisition Improvement Plan" and "CPI 2.0". He successfully filled civilian acquisition vacancies across the Air Force, increased civilian and military authorizations, balanced the mix of General Officers and Senior Executives, and provided 30 percent more training opportunities for acquisition personnel. To stabilize the acquisition budget and instill financial discipline in acquisition programs, Mr. Durante directed a significant increase in cost estimating confidence levels and established realistic baselines for cost, schedule and performance. He directed the analysis of contractor overhead rates and tied contractor profits directly to their performance. He worked directly with a number of industry partners to refine accounting and reporting processes to improve accuracy and reduce long-term costs to the government. Under CPI 2.0, he also simplified cumbersome bureaucracy and reduced oversight to provide acquisition programs more stability.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I would like to draw your attention to Mr. Durante's dedication to success in our overseas conflicts. He personally drove the creation of the Iraqi and Afghan Transportation Networks as a method of advancing Counterinsurgency Operations, while minimizing the exposure of our troops to roadside bombs. This unique endeavor established a consortium of tribally owned and operated transportation companies that collectively provide secure, dependable transportation services throughout hostile territories. This method was used in both Iraq and Afghanistan, and the program is estimated to have taken 3.5 soldiers and 2.5 gun vehicles off the road for every 10 Network trucks in service. This is truly an amazing success and deserves proper recognition.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Durante leaves a legacy of integrity, innovation, and dedication to those who serve. I ask that my colleagues join me in expressing our sincere appreciation to Mr. Durante for his outstanding service to this